

MONTANA KAIMIN

THE FIGHT FOR FOOD

With financial aid delays and campus dining changes, students at the University of Montana struggle to avoid hunger



STORY BY CORBIN VANDERBY | PHOTOS BY RACHEL YEAGER

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Cover photo by Rachel Yeager

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The Montana Kaimin is a weekly, independent student newspaper at the University of Montana. The Kaimin office and the University of Montana are located on land originally inhabited by the Salish People. Kaimin is a derivative of a Salish language word, "Qe'ymin," that is pronounced kay-MEEN and means "book," "message" or "paper that brings news."

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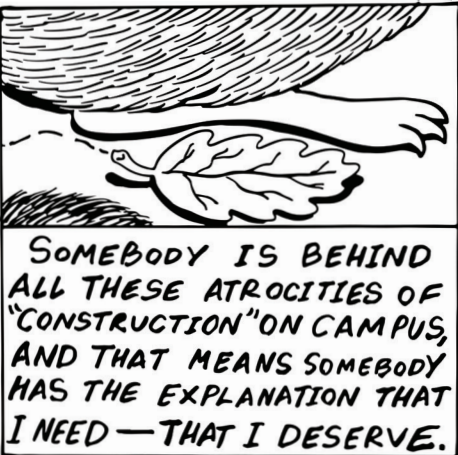
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DETECTIVE SQUIRREL: SE 2 EP 3



BARRETT CLEMENT | MONTANA KAIMIN

BARRETT

When FAFSA delays leave students hungry, who is there to help?

Access to food at the University of Montana this year has become far too exclusive — dining plans are more expensive and offer less access. No campus dining locations accept federal food support programs and the rise in the cost of living makes it harder for students to have regular and healthy diets.

On top of the setbacks, financial aid, the most crucial aspect in funding students' education, was delayed this year.

In week one, students received emails about the delays, hoping for a quick fix. And then another week went by. And another.

Now, six weeks into the fall semester, some students still haven't received their financial aid reimbursements, and the fallout is no longer a hypothetical inconvenience. The real consequences of inefficient infrastructure are only becoming more clear — students are going hungry.

Whether it comes from the federal government or from the University, there should be a backup plan for failures like this, and we needed it yesterday. UM needs a lifeline to meet students' basic needs when shit hits the fan.

Granted, as reported in this week's feature, financial aid started rolling out smaller subsistence checks to students in lieu of full

reimbursements. But one student said she was only given \$1,000, nearly \$5,000 less than she is used to receiving.

But beyond financial aid, dining on campus is becoming simply inaccessible.

In February of last year, the Market in the University Center stopped accepting the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and Electronic Benefit Transfer, two federal food assistance programs. The backout wasn't the University's fault — the change came after the U.S. Department of Agriculture updated qualifiers to be more specifically used for grocery store-style ingredients.

Even though the University isn't to blame, however, there should be a more noticeable effort to make food available to all students all the time.

This includes promoting and supporting things like Bear Necessities, a program designed to help students experiencing basic need insecurities, and the University's food pantry. In a Montana Kaimin article from last winter that reported on the Market changes, one student said they hadn't heard about Bear Necessities in their entire four years at UM.

And recent decisions seem to have exac-

erbated problems.

The main issue is with The Lodge Dining Center. Our brand-spankin-new shiny turd of a dining facility not only has more expensive dining plans, but figured students who weren't willing to pay \$3,600 a semester would be fine without food on weekends, especially given the easily accessible, state-of-the-art kitchens in every dorm on campus. Ha.

Sure, it's a great building, and it definitely helps with bringing in new students. But it feels like the University is putting the squeeze on students for reasons that aren't their fault. We didn't decide to build the \$47 million building, but we are bearing the brunt of the cost.

And say goodbye to eating anywhere other than the dining hall, apparently. This year, we lost the All-Campus dining plan, an option giving students a weekly allowance to use at the dining hall, University Center and the now dead-and-buried Rise+Rooted. It seems UM is directing all students' mouths to the Lodge, which has limited options and a lack of healthy meals. In short: Why has the University become a manufactured food desert?

That's beside the point, though. Obvi-

ously, the FAFSA delay wasn't expected, but that doesn't mean there shouldn't be more effective emergency channels to keep students fed.

How about a food drive? A budget cooking workshop? Something that shows hungry students the University hears them. If anything, it would be a great opportunity for UM to build comaraderie with its students. Instead of another email, get out and show us that "Yeah, this sucks and is out of our control. But in the meantime, we are going to do everything possible to meet our students' needs."

But if the University can't help its students, let's support each other. Donate to the food pantry in the University Center. Check in on your friends. Even offering a ride to somewhere off campus that accepts federal food support programs can help.

Dear UM: Do what you can. Every week that goes by makes students more and more frustrated for something you can't control. But this is something you can address.

Like it? Hate it? Let us know.
Email us your opinions at
claire.bernard@umontana.edu

Setting the mood



As seen from the tree line of Mount Sentinel at the end of golden hour on Sep. 22, the autumn equinox sunset over Missoula marks the turn of the seasons both in light and color. **DIEGO HERNANDEZ | MONTANA KAIMIN**

SUDOKU

Difficulty: Easy

	7		1		5		6	
			8					
		3			4			
1		9		2	6			4
4						7		
					9			
2		4					7	9
		7						3
		1	5				2	

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Edited by Margie E. Burke

HOW TO SOLVE:

Each row must contain the numbers 1 to 9; each column must contain the numbers 1 to 9; and each set of 3 by 3 boxes must contain the numbers 1 to 9.

Answer to Previous Sudoku:

2	3	7	6	9	1	5	4	8
6	9	8	4	5	3	1	2	7
5	1	4	7	2	8	9	6	3
1	7	6	2	4	5	3	8	9
3	4	5	1	8	9	6	7	2
9	8	2	3	7	6	4	1	5
8	6	3	9	1	2	7	5	4
7	2	1	5	3	4	8	9	6
4	5	9	8	6	7	2	3	1

Montana Film Festival returns; NCAA settlement could hurt Montana athletic programs

MONTANA FILM FESTIVAL TURNS 10

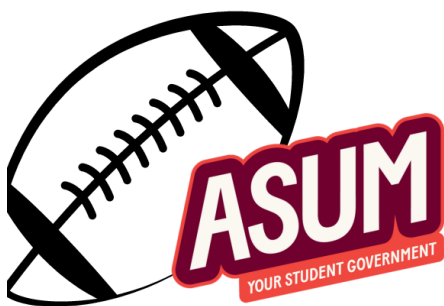
Hosted by the Roxy Theater, the Montana Film Festival is celebrating its 10th year. The festival runs from Oct. 3 to 6, with screenings held at the main theater and the Roxy Annex. With 10 feature films and four blocks of short films, this year's festival features a variety of forms and genres.

The 2024 lineup includes four films with strong ties to Montana. "Bitterroot," about a Hmong man living in Western Montana, was filmed in the state. The coming-of-age drama "Jazzy" and dark comedy/thriller "Vulcanizadora" are also Montana-based. "Vulcanizadora" is made by festival alumni, meaning those who have had a film screen at an earlier festival.

PINK OUT GAME IS OCTOBER 5!



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This year also features special career retrospectives on the work of experimental animators Faith Hubley and John Hubley, as well as the work of their daughter, Emily Hubley. Both retrospectives will be followed by a question-and-answer session with Emily Hubley. The opening night ceremony will also feature a screening of Faith Hubley's "My Universe Inside Out" and a selection of programming curated by Emily Hubley.

In addition to the opening and closing night celebrations, the festival offers other events. This year's selection for the festival's traditional script read comes from local screenwriter Tobin Addington's "Eleanor of Aquitaine: The Hawk & the Lion," the first episode of a limited historical drama about the titular queen. The festival is hosting a free seminar on best practices for filmmakers and applying for the Big Sky Film Grant. The festival also offers a paid two-day rapid training course in film and media trades, sponsored by the Accelerate Montana Media Training Center.

The full festival schedule, as well as an events schedule, can be found online at montanafilmfestival.org.

(Keely Proebstel)

PROPOSED NCAA SETTLEMENT COULD COST UM \$2 MILLION

A proposed settlement of an NCAA lawsuit could cost the University of Montana nearly \$2 million over 10 years due to payouts to athletes who were previously denied compensation from the use of their Name, Image and Likeness.

In 2020, collegiate athletes filed an antitrust lawsuit against the NCAA, arguing they deserve to be paid damages for not receiving Name, Image and Likeness opportunities before it was approved in 2021. It further argued the definition of the Name, Image or Likeness deal should be expanded to a new system that would allow universities to directly pay athletes for these deals.

Now, four years later, the South Dakota Board of Regents has filed a lawsuit alleging the proposed settlement would adversely affect rural universities and female athletes disproportionately. Although the Montana Board of Regents has not joined as a plaintiff in the case, Montana Governor Greg Gianforte signed a letter alongside other Republican governors from Idaho, Wyoming, North Dakota and South Dakota requesting the NCAA "restructure the settlement to avoid the current agreement's devastating financial impact on small athletic programs in more rural states."

UM athletic director Kent Haslam told the Daily Montanan the initial projection for how much the settlement would cost the University comes in at around \$200,000 a year, or \$2 million over 10 years. Out of UM's \$23 million

athletic budget, that is "significant" money, Haslam said.

Haslam further said athletes at UM aren't the ones who will benefit from this settlement, but athletes at larger institutions in larger conferences will see more from the back pay.

Montana State University is estimated to lose \$235,000 a year, according to the Daily Montanan.

The settlement is still pending in court and is currently on hold while the parties involved take another look at the terms.

(Claire Bernard)

Listen to Bayliss Flynn on the Kaimin Cast



Sylvin Lubeley observes the men's club soccer team's first practice on Sept. 17.

MARLEY BARBOEISEL | MONTANA KAIMIN

Men's club soccer is back at the University of Montana after decades of attempts at restarting. Players from the last established team in the 1980s are helping athletes 40 years younger to get the new team kicking.

"It's about the experience. It's about the fun. It's about the enjoyment you get and these lifelong relationships you make with people through the game. It's intimate in certain ways, but you kind of expose your soul when you play, and you share your soul with your teammates," Charlie Vandam, a 1981 Griz alumni, said.



New episodes out to every other Monday. Scan for the latest.

POLICE BLOTTER

CORBIN VANDERBY

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Well, we made it through the first month and you criminals have sure been busy. From Sept. 20 to 29, the University of Montana Police Department had 13 crimes reported. Thanks for spoiling us and making sure we had our pick of the litter. Without further ado, here are the crimes I can't help but share.

FRIDAY, SEPT. 20 — DUDE, WHERE'S MY CAR?

umpd received a call at 4:30 p.m. from a student in distress claiming their car had been stolen, as they didn't see it where they last parked around Beckwith and Madeline ave. Turns out, sometimes your memory can't be trusted as umpd recieved another call from the same person shortly after saying they found their car in the aber parking lot ... where they had parked it. the case was closed as there was no actual car theft. I'm just glad the owner and the car were reunited, i love a good happy ending.

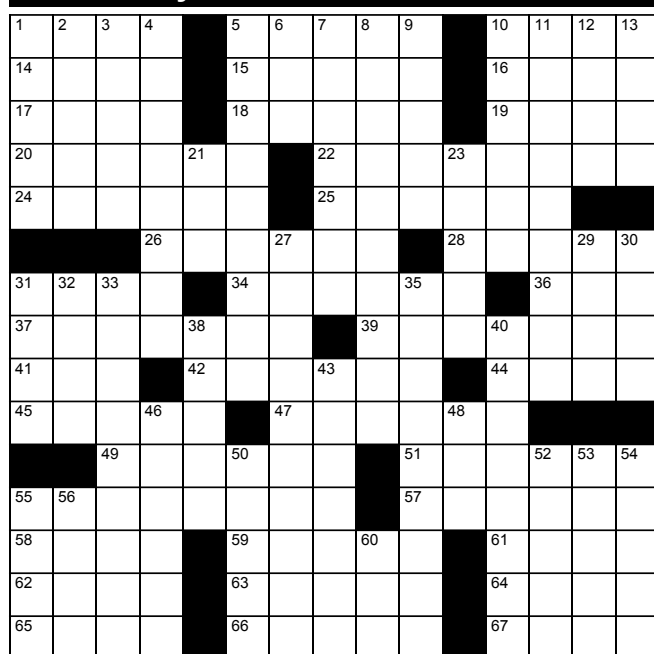
TUESDAY, SEPT. 24 — TIS BUT A SCRATCH

Around 8:30 in the morning, a person parked outside of the Iron Griz: American Bistro noticed minor damage to their car and reported it as criminal mischief to UMPD. The officer on scene described the damage as a minor scratch and believed the wind could have caused it, although there was no way to prove it. The case was closed with no suspects but, to the car owner: I'd say this mystery isn't solved. It was definitely some meddling kids who lightly scratched your car.

SUNDAY, SEPT. 29 — FROLICKING IN THE FOOTBALL FIELD

Just past midnight, UMPD found two people trespassing in the Washington-Grizzly Stadium, one being a student and the other not. According to Brad Giffin, police chief of UMPD, when asked what they were doing on the football field that late at night, they admitted it was "kind of a stupid thing to do," but they just wanted to run around. The case was closed and they were referred to the student code of conduct. Although the Kaimin does not condone trespassing, I will reserve my judgement, because that night, they were truly free.

The Weekly Crossword by Margie E. Burke



ACROSS

- 1 Raise, as doubt
5 Implore
10 Crusty desserts
14 Aware of
15 Evans or Blair
16 Second word of many limericks
17 "In ___ of flowers ..."
18 Extra-cost item
19 Workplace safety org.
20 Fish-eating hawk
22 Like some motives
24 Fight off
25 Looked as if
26 Bread units
28 Sticking point?
31 Mattress type
34 "Peanuts" brainiac
36 A wee hour
37 Speak softly
39 Coming
41 Balloon filler
42 Upward climb
44 Like Goodwill goods
45 Military bases
47 Objective
49 Tennessee NFLers
51 Chuck of action films
55 Arlington landmark
57 Sure-handed
58 Egg shape
59 Desert plant
61 Name anagram
62 Pathetic

DOWN

- 63 Great danger
64 "Ta ta", in Turin
65 Bullring cheers
66 Hostile force
67 Didn't draw a card
21 Subj. for U.S. newcomers
23 Hot coal
27 Cancer causer
29 Start the pot
30 Marsh growth
31 Kind of meet
32 The Buckeye State
33 Birth certificate entry
35 In a deep way
38 Naples staple
40 Community program
43 Catch in a trap
46 Lines on spines
48 Forget-me-___
50 Showing shock
52 Silklike fabric
53 Something to shoot for
54 Church council
55 Horseback sport
56 Short critique?
60 ___ and vigor

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Answers to Previous Crossword:

C	L	E	A	R	H	A	T	E	R	O	B	S
R	A	M	I	E	O	W	E	N	O	V	A	L
O	Z	A	R	K	P	E	N	T	H	O	U	S
P	E	N	C	I	L	S	T	R	I	M	M	E
R	A	I	N	D	R	O	P	N	I	T	W	I
E	S	P	L	A	T	E	S	T	T	I	N	E
S	C	A	L	E	C	A	T	P	E	N	C	E
T	O	T	O	T	H	R	A	L	L	T	U	N
S	T	E	N	C	H	S	T	E	E	L	E	R
G	O	E	R	E	N	T	E	R				
R	E	P	L	A	C	E	M	A	H	A	T	M
A	V	A	I	L	A	B	L	E	O	N	I	O
C	A	L	F	R	E	I	N	R	E	M	I	T
K	N	E	E	S	L	I	T	A	D	E	L	E

Coffee-o-Scope

GRACE SIMONICH

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Like many college students, I drink coffee almost every single day. It's the perfect time of year for a cozy fall beverage. Sate your caffeine addiction and find out here what the stars have in store for your next coffee order.

LIBRA (SEPT. 23 - OCT. 22): FLAT WHITE

You seek harmony in all things, Libra, and the flat white offers that perfect balance of coffee and milk. Balanced, elegant and just the right amount of smooth, it's refined and subtle, just like your approach to life and relationships.

SCORPIO (OCT. 23 - NOV. 21): DARK ROAST

Intense and brooding, your coffee has to match your mysterious nature. A dark roast is full of depth, complexity and intrigue, much like you, Scorpio. You're not afraid to go deep, and your coffee choice reflects your love for strong, bold experiences.

SAGITTARIUS (NOV. 22 - DEC. 21): COLD BREW

Always on the go and seeking adventure, you love the bold, energizing kick of a cold brew. It's the perfect grab-and-go option for your free spirit, Sagittarius, whether you're planning your next spontaneous trip or philosophizing about life over a cup.

CAPRICORN (DEC. 22 - JAN. 19): CAPPUCCINO

You're all about structure and tradition, so a classic cappuccino suits you perfectly, Capricorn. It's disciplined, reliable and sophisticated, just like you. You're the type who can stick to a routine and still make it look effortlessly classy.

AQUARIUS (JAN. 20 - FEB. 18): NITRO COLD BREW

Innovative and unconventional, you're drawn to whatever's cutting-edge, so nitro cold brew is your new go-to. With its smooth frothy texture, this drink feels just as unique and quirky as the person who orders it. Always ahead of the curve, you need a drink that matches your avant-garde personality, Aquarius.

PISCES (FEB. 19 - MARCH 20): CHAI LATTE

Dreamy and intuitive, you opt for a chai latte — something soothing and slightly whimsical. With its blend of spices and milk, this drink is comforting and evokes the kind of spiritual and emotional depth you're known for, Pisces.

You're often lost in thought and a chai latte gives you that peaceful, reflective moment.

ARIES (MARCH 21 - APRIL 19): DOUBLE ESPRESSO

Aries, you need something quick and energizing to keep you moving for the next 10 hours. Basically pure caffeine, a double espresso fuels your determination and lets you conquer the day. Bold and impulsive, you're always on the move, so this shot of adrenaline is just what you need.

TAURUS (APRIL 20 - MAY 20): VANILLA LATTE

Taurus, you crave comfort and nothing says luxury like a rich, creamy vanilla latte. You appreciate the finer things and your coffee order reflects your love for indulgence. You take your time with life, just like you do with each warm soothing sip.

GEMINI (MAY 21 - JUNE 20): ICED COFFEE

No matter the season, you're grabbing an iced coffee. You love variety and socializing, Gemini, and an iced coffee is as versatile as you are. Whether you're chatting up friends or running off to your next adventure, iced coffee is your cool and caffeinated companion.

CANCER (JUNE 21 - JULY 22): MOCHA

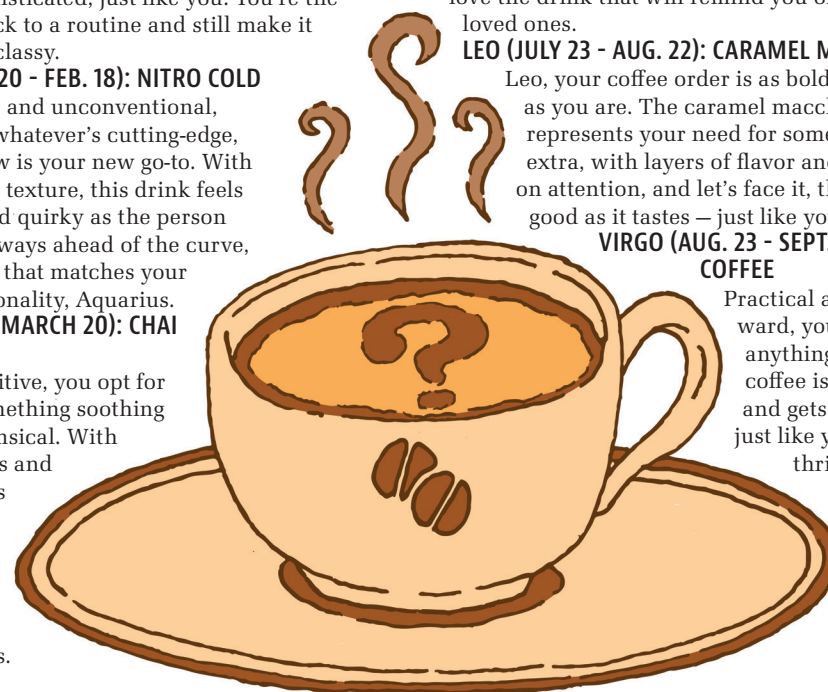
A mocha is sweet but complex, just like your emotional depth. This drink blends the nurturing nature of your water sign with the comforting embrace of chocolate. If you love nostalgia and connection, Cancer, then you'll love the drink that will remind you of cozy days with loved ones.

LEO (JULY 23 - AUG. 22): CARAMEL MACCHIATO

Leo, your coffee order is as bold and extravagant as you are. The caramel macchiato perfectly represents your need for something a little extra, with layers of flavor and flair. You thrive on attention, and let's face it, this drink looks as good as it tastes — just like you.

VIRGO (AUG. 23 - SEPT. 22): BLACK COFFEE

Practical and straightforward, you don't need anything fancy. Black coffee is efficient, classic and gets the job done — just like you, Virgo. You thrive on order and precision, so your coffee order reflects your no-nonsense approach to life.



BARRETT CLEMENT | MONTANA KAIMIN

Campus gears up to make its own sustainable power source

SAV CHAVEZ
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The University of Montana's combined power and heat project, which originally broke ground in 2021 for the new power plant, is estimated to reduce greenhouse gasses by 30% and save campus up to \$2 million in spending.

The University has spent an average of \$3.2 million a year over the last five years for campus electricity from NorthWestern Energy, according to Tim Gauthier, a UM facilities engineer.

"NorthWestern Energy has a significantly dirtier emissions factor than the power we would be generating," Eva Rocke, UM sustainability coordinator, said.

Currently, staff do not know how much spending will go to the new plant annually.

"It is impossible to give you an accurate number," Gauthier said. "There are many annual costs that come along with the operation of [the project]."

Originally, UM received fuel from NorthWestern Energy, but Rocke said the coal-burning emits more harmful emissions. The new project will run natural gasses through two gas turbines to produce steam, which will be used to make electricity for the University.

The combined heat and power project commissioned McKinstry — a company that offers resources such as engineering and design, facility condition assessments and active energy management — to construct the new plant. UM signed an \$18 million contract with McKinstry, but the project costs are even higher. The project is funded by bonds that are used to upgrade the campus, including supplying new lights and providing an alternative to the century-old heating plant.

The intention of the new plant is to provide heat for the University in a sustainable way. It will also allow UM to make its own energy, instead of using coal-burning.

"The climate impact of [burning coal] is worse in terms of what we have to take credit for in our emissions," Rocke said. "The emissions factor from natural gas by itself is smaller."

According to the U.S. Energy Information Administration, natural gas is one of the cleanest fossil fuels as it emits almost 50% less carbon dioxide than coal.

While the plant provides a more sustainable form of energy, it also provides the staff inside the plant with some upgrades. The original heating plant had no space to hold meetings or to escape the scorching machines. The new plant not only has a meeting room, but it can also be run via a computer system.

"The guys have always just sat down by the boilers. This will be the first time in 100 years that there is actually a control room where

everything is run by computer and they can see everything," Anthony Ey, a stationary engineer for UM, said. "It makes it so much easier to work."

The original heating plant produced a total of 0.4 megawatts of energy, unable to power the entire campus. The new plant is set to provide up to 5.5 megawatts of energy, making it possible for UM to completely supply itself. On average, a megawatt can power an American home for a month.

Though the University will no longer be purchasing all of its energy from NorthWestern, in the case of an emergency, campus still has the power company as a backup plan.

The project, which began just after the COVID-19 pandemic, was originally estimated to be a one- to two-year project. Due to manufacturing, supply chain changes and some employees moving on and others getting

promotions, the project is set to be complete by the end of October this year.

Luca Welle, an environmental studies major from Whitefish, Montana, said he learned of the new power project through the Climate Response Club, a group of students dedicated to pursuing a sustainable future for campus, according to its website. There, he began to dissect how the plant will impact the climate in both positive and negative ways.

Welle explained he would have liked to see UM invest in "more sustainable electricity sources," such as more solar panels or even geothermal, a source that derives its energy from the Earth's heat.

Welle said he would like to see solar panels placed above parking lots like a roof, which would also keep vehicles in the lot cool during the hot summer months.

"While the system can supposedly run off of a clean fuel, such as hydrogen, in the

future, the University could have taken a more sustainable avenue to our power needs," Welle said.

While the avenue of solar panels was explored by Rocke, she said it was not a feasible option for the University as there is not enough space on campus to provide enough solar panels to power all of campus.

"We didn't just wake up one day and decide to pursue combined heat and power," Rocke said. "We spent lots of time and energy researching a variety of options for meeting our climate goals."

Other options considered were large-scale solar, off-site wind and biomass, but heat and power made more sense financially.

With a few test runs of the new plant under their belts, Rocke, Ey and Gauthier said they are confident the new plant will be a cost effective and sustainable energy source for the University.

VOTE TIM SHEEHY

★ NAVY SEAL ★ U.S. SENATE ★

Navy SEAL

Tim earned the **Bronze Star with Valor** for Heroism in Combat and the **Purple Heart Medal**.

Tim Sheehy is a former Navy SEAL. Use of his military rank, job titles, and photographs in uniform does not imply endorsement by the Department of the Navy or the Department of Defense.



Veteran-Led Cattle Ranch

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Job Creator

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A design for past and present: The UM Oval centerpiece

ELLE DANIEL

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Bradley Allen could design the centerpiece for the University of Montana Oval quickly, or he could design it right.

Paula Short, the UM Facility Services building coordinator, approached Allen in 2021. They had previously worked together on bronze-casting projects and Facility Services wanted to revamp the Oval.

A 2020 remodel removed the old bricks and the original crest, leaving behind a plain dirt circle and an opportunity to do something more with a new crest. Allen, a professor at the School of Visual and Media Arts, agreed to work on the centerpiece, but he didn't want it to be rushed. With a budget of \$10,000, he believed it was important to design an enduring centerpiece — one that also encapsulated UM's expanded community.

Allen worked with a team to start multicultural, cross-campus discussions on potential designs. UM chief of staff Kelly Webster was part of the team and supported Allen's goal to take his time.

"We could have done it in 2021 if we chose to control every piece of the process, but we've chosen to engage," Webster said.

The crest's raised edges made it difficult for

facility services to plow snow without damaging it, leading to a remodel in 2020. It featured the University's founding date in 1893, the symbol of a hand holding a torch and UM's Latin motto, "Lux et Veritas," or "Light and Truth."

Allen, Webster and Short hope to get the centerpiece built, shipped, assembled and installed during the current fall semester, but said it'll depend on how quickly the vendor can cut the bronze and get it shipped. Currently, they do not have a vendor chosen.

Now the centerpiece is in its final stages of design. According to Allen, it'll be seven feet in diameter and made of bronze that will turn a blue-green color as it oxidizes over time. A UM brand at the center, embodied by an older University logo, will in part represent the UM Alumni Foundation.

"There's a reflex in designs to go with kind of the new mark, you know, the most cutting edge version of yourself at all times," Allen said. "I think we were able to feel that response ... and then kind of question it."

Beneath the logo are grizzly paw prints. They'll overlap to create a unique texture that will age in different stages. Allen said the weather was also a factor he considered. He wanted the design to be dynamic, especially over the seasons as the paw prints fill with snow, water and leaves.

The design will also include a brief statement in Salish to mark the Oval as a traditional Salish homeland.

Allen said he thinks of the design as a centerpiece rather than a seal.

"Because the University has a seal," he said, "but it's the center of that place, and that place has a long history."

That history refers to the Salish and Kalispel nations who previously lived on the land. According to Sadie Peone-Stops, the director of the Selis Qlispe Culture Committee, the tribes camped on the land in the spring, offering prayers of thanks while collecting the abundant bitterroot to eat.

"When it's about Indigenous people, we try to make sure we co-design," said Karla Bird, the University's tribal outreach specialist. Bird, a UM alumni and member of the Blackfeet Nation, worked with Peone-Stops and the committee on the design.

"It's natural for people to think about the outcome," Bird said. "But we're trying to be intentional with the process."

Bird viewed the collaboration between UM and the Salish tribal nations as a way to put land acknowledgement into action.

Peone-Stops said UM reached out for more than just a translation or a land acknowledgement statement.

The committee, which includes an advisory council of tribal elders, considered several ideas.

"We didn't want it to be elaborate ... but simple and to the point, just as it is Salish and Kalispel homeland," Peone said. "There's no other way to put that."

For Peone-Stops, including the Salish and Kalispel tribes on the centerpiece isn't just a land acknowledgement.

"It's in a way honoring our people and our ancestors and the inclusion of our people," she said.

The Selis Qlispe Cultural Committee also helped Allen make sure the language was drawn up correctly, both in translation and the way it looked on the design. In a statement via email, Peone said, "We are thankful to the UM leadership for the relationship and friendship, and for recognizing the importance of our people's inclusion in this amazing and important Oval that is at the heart of the campus."

After the centerpiece is completed, Allen, Webster and Bird will start work on an outer rim to go around the main piece. According to Allen, it will have UM's founding date along with languages and markings from tribal nations across Montana.

"What we put in [the outer rim] is, I think, exciting to kind of leave open for now, but we know we want to include every tribe that we can in Montana," Allen said.

Once the designs are finalized, Allen and the team will choose a vendor to cut the centerpiece. It'll be shipped to UM in pieces that Allen will put together himself. Afterward, Facility Services will install it in the Oval. The installation effort will be overseen by Short.

Short said a fall installation of the centerpiece would take place during one of the largest infrastructure resets in history. "It's sort of this turning of a page at the University," she said, "but also honoring the past."

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An 1890 photo of tipis by the river in Missoula. Salish tribes lived on the land that would later become the University of Montana campus. The new Oval centerpiece will include an acknowledgment of Salish traditional homelands. CONTRIBUTED | MANSFIELD LIBRARY, UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA

THE FIGHT FOR FOOD

University of Mont
food admidst finan
changes.



ana students struggle to find cial aid delays and campus dining

STORY BY CORBIN VANDERBY | PHOTOS BY RACHEL YEAGER



THE GROUND TURKEY SIZZLED on the pan, browning with the heat of the stove as a Saturday afternoon rolled by. O'Maste Win Foster stirred the meat, knowing no bite could go to waste. On the counter nearby sat a small bag of lettuce and other bagged vegetables she'd made sure to fit into the budget.

Foster was cooking in her off-campus apartment what she considered a "simple meal" for dinner that day and the next. She wasn't sure the next time she'd have a home-cooked meal, but she would make this one last.

Despite the simple meal, getting the components was anything but. Each ingredient was painstakingly chosen for its cost, nutritional value and longevity, even down to the seasoning. The turkey wasn't chosen for taste or preference, but because at \$4 per pound, it was a couple of dollars cheaper than beef. The bag of mini bell peppers, \$4.99, and grape tomatoes, \$5, were chosen because they were a better deal than buying full-sized vegetables individually.

Generic packets of taco seasoning mix, \$1 per packet, were chosen for the finishing touch because they were cheaper than individual bottles of seasoning. The total cost for the weekend dinner came out to around \$25.

As Foster put the meal together, she thought about her finances. Maybe if her financial aid refund from the University of Montana came in on time, or maybe if she hadn't quit her summer job early, relying on the refund to cover costs, she wouldn't have to eat like this. And if it weren't for the \$75 Albertsons gift card she was gifted from her adviser, she wouldn't have any of this food.

The stress of her last year of school, combined with living on her own and the future ahead after graduation all weighed on her mind. Now food insecurity was just another problem to add to the mix.

Amidst rising food costs, college students across the nation are struggling to afford food. At UM, delays in financial aid have left students like Foster still waiting for the money they depend on. This year, refunds from the Financial Aid Department at UM have been behind, delaying the usual reimbursement some students rely on receiving at the beginning of every semester.

To further complicate things, the new Lodge Dining Center, which cost \$50 million, came with new changes to campus meal plans. Before, the cheapest meal plan cost students around \$2,800 a semester and offered 15 meals per week. Now, with the new Lodge, the cheapest meal plan, the Silver Five Day Plan, has increased so students are paying \$2,978 a semester but are only able to use the meal plan on weekdays. If students want to eat on campus on the weekend, they will have to pay up to \$15 out-of-pocket.

O'Maste Win Foster's vibrant pantry mural adds a colorful touch to the street in Missoula on Sept. 22nd.

With \$50 left on the gift card, Foster wondered how much longer she could make it before she's back to eating canned soup or whatever else she could find at food pantries around town. Each day that passed, Foster had less and less food and had to find a way to make it through the coming week.

A starving nation

The National Center for Education Statistics found about 23% of college students nationwide reported dealing with low or very low food security, according to a 2020 report. That's more than 12% higher than all households in America, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

When projected to the entire student population, an estimated 3.9 million undergraduate students across the country struggle to find food.

From 2022 to 2023, food prices increased by nearly 10%, faster than any year since 1979, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Last year, prices increased again by almost 6%, and this year most food prices are predicted to continue to rise.

Food insecurity has been found to increase the likelihood of health conditions like diabetes, heart disease and obesity. Along with physical health, it takes a toll on mental health, too.

According to a 2019 study from the Journal of Adolescent Health that surveyed 14,786 young adults, those who considered themselves food insecure had almost double the rates of mental illness than their counterparts, with 29% diagnosed with depression, 21% with anxiety and 17% with suicidal thoughts.

For Foster, she's felt the mental toll of food insecurity firsthand.

"The mental toll of not having food is almost like feeling helpless," Foster said. "It's like, 'Damn, I'm coming home to nothing, and I have no other resources besides free food out there.'"

The path to the present

Foster and six of her siblings filled the house she grew up in on the Rosebud Indian Reservation in South Dakota. Although she didn't realize it, food was tight back then, too, and her parents budgeted similarly to how she does now.

"The type of food that was available to us was a bunch of junk," Foster, who is Blackfeet, Assinaboine and Lakota, said.

Often, they relied on cheap and fast meals like Hamburger Helper, mac and cheese and hot dogs. Foster said there are jokes and stereotypes about Indigenous peoples' lack of access to healthy food. But for her, she said, they were true to her childhood.

According to a study done by Feeding America in 2020, about 25% of Indigenous Americans experienced food insecurity, which is higher than the 11% of America as a whole.

As Foster got older, however, she distanced herself from foods she deemed unhealthy, trying to get her body to look a certain way.

Foster began to get her mom to buy ingredients from the grocery store so Foster could cook healthier meals for the family, but this quickly stretched their money thin.

“All of us kids under one roof, the food bill? I mean, if I’m spending \$100, \$200 on myself, that bill to spend on all of us has to be at least half of one paycheck,” Foster said.

Through the years of cooking for her family, Foster began to forge a connection with food, especially with how it could provide for her community. Her mother raised her with a traditional sense of what it meant to be a woman, she said.

“What women usually do in tribal households is they cook, they create, they care for, they protect, they do almost everything,” Foster said. “The older siblings didn’t want that responsibility. The younger siblings didn’t want that responsibility. And for me, it was like, yeah, I’ll do it, my parents are old, and they’re working all the time too.”

Despite not having a lot of food and money, Foster said she still tries to share and cook for others like her friends and previous roommates when she can.

“I share a lot, so it’s not just me in the struggle,” Foster said. “I think food should always be involved, so there were times where I was spending my own money to create a meal for the community.”

Today, Foster is a media arts major at UM, budgeting and working like her parents did. Now, however, she needs the help she once offered to her friends and family.

Devastating delays

Due to technical issues, the Free Application for Federal Student Aid forms, which are required to determine financial aid eligibility, were delayed almost three months, unavailable to students until last December. The changed timeline caught the UM Financial Aid Office off guard, making it harder to apply aid to each student.

The University still has not given an official timeline for all aid to be applied and all late fees for paying tuition have been dropped, according to previous Kaimin reporting from Sept. 12.

However, financial aid is vital to students who depend on receiving the payout once tuition and fees are covered. According to UM’s website, students begin to receive these reimbursements a week before classes start. However, as of Sept. 22, students like Foster still have not received their full reimbursement, six weeks into the semester.

To make up for this, the financial aid office offered checks to help some students who expected their reimbursements sooner, but the small reimbursements weren’t enough for students like Foster who found herself behind on rent and bills and in need of food.

Foster said her refund can usually be anywhere from \$6,000 to \$8,000 and she often relies on that money until she gets settled in for the semester with a steady job. After a



Inside O’Maste Win Foster’s apartment, smells of tacos and veggies fill the air after she prepares a meal for herself on Sept. 22.

month of waiting, Foster said she received only \$1,000.

“I just got a grand after experiencing almost a month of, like, straight up not having food,” Foster said. “That went out the door real quick.”

Kat Cowley, director of Bear Necessities, which runs the food pantry on campus and advocates for students in need, said she’s heard this complaint from many students in need of food.

“That is something we have heard from students and something that I think is visible if you walk around campus,” Cowley said. “I know financial aid is hustling and doing what it can, but it’s something that there’s not a ton of support available to help with those outside of academic costs when something like this happens.”

According to Cowley, as of Sept. 18, the pantry has seen 354 visits, around 12% more than the same time frame from last year.

Foster said she often visits some of the food pantries around town and that a lot of the canned food in her cabinets comes from them.

Dining changes

Walking through the doors to The Lodge Dining Center, Mackenzie Otis, a freshman at UM studying psychology, looked around. She saw pizza, burgers and a salad bar, but she wished she had more healthy options.

Otis has the Silver Five Day plan and on the weekends she has to take from her savings to buy groceries, but only spends around \$25 to \$50. This often leads her to only eat small snacks like cheese sticks or muffins instead of full meals because it’s cheaper and easier.

Otis said she’d like to cook for herself more, but living on campus makes it difficult. Otis lives in Jesse Hall where the kitchen is locked on the 11th floor. To get the key, Jesse residents have to go to the Knowles Hall reception desk. The kitchen also has restrictions not allowing students to cook anything using oil or meat.

Otis said she knows the food pantry on campus is one option, but doesn’t use it because she finds it intimidating.

“I think also, there’s definitely a stigma behind needing that type of help,” Otis said. “That definitely would hold me back a little bit.”

Foster’s fridge in her one-bedroom apartment sits with a few ingredients for the day ahead.



Otis doesn't have a car, meaning she's only able to get food within a walkable distance from campus. There are places like The Market and Liquid Planet, but Otis said those are too expensive for her budget. Rise+Rooted was another option last year — located next to the Food Zoo in the Emma B. Lommasson Center — that offered coffee, pizza, pasta and other snacks, but it closed on July 26 to focus campus dining staff to the Lodge, according to UM spokesperson Dave Kuntz.

Like Foster, Otis gets her groceries from Eastside Albertsons, about a 15-minute walk from Jesse. Otis enjoys walking to stay active and walks about seven miles a day, but because of not eating enough food, she often gets tired.

"I definitely feel like trash," Otis said. "There is definitely a point in my day where my body is just like done."

Community charity

One option for students like Foster and Otis is food pantries. Food pantries, often stocked by volunteers and donations, allow people suffering from food insecurity to access free food. Missoula has five food pantries scattered across town, including one on campus at the University Center run by Bear Necessities.

The food pantry on campus is funded by money from the University's student government and is used to buy food from the Montana Food Bank Network, — its biggest source — Costco and the local Program in Ecological Agriculture and Society Farm.

It also gets some food from a Missoula food bank as well as leftovers from UM Catering. On top of money from the Student Senate, Cowley also writes applications for grants and fundraisers every year.

Cowley said one goal of the on-campus food pantry is to make it as accessible to students as possible. Outside of the pantry is a grab-and-go shelf that allows students to take some food without any paperwork or communication at all. Inside the pantry itself, though, students are required to fill out what Cowley jokingly calls "the world's shortest intake form."

The form requires a name and a date, and once the form is filled out, students are allowed to get whatever they want or need with the only limitations being high-demand products, such as meat, when it's available.

The food pantry also has five remote shelves on campus at the Eck Hall Liberal Arts Building, outside the TRIO office in Aber Hall, at the Law School, which is only accessible to law students, at the American Indian Student Services and at Missoula College.

Cowley said she helps students in need register for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and food stamps. The government-funded program gives people monthly payments that can only be used for food. The average monthly payment to an individual in Montana is \$177 per month.

But applicants in Montana are often waiting anywhere from seven to 30 days. The state attributes the reason for the drop in timeliness rates to struggles with COVID-19 and the redetermination process with Medicaid that saw over 19,000 people lose coverage last May.

Cowley said anyone interested in applying can come to the food pantry and be helped through the process.

But even with the federal assistance, Cowley said no places on campus accept the food stamps, meaning students have to go to off-campus stores to use them. The Market in the University Center used to accept them until last February, but after the U.S. Department of Agriculture reevaluated The Market, it decided it didn't meet the requirements to accept the benefits due to mostly selling pre-packaged foods.

Cowley said she tries to make the process of receiving food as easy as possible as students often have a hard time advocating for themselves. Cowley also said she advocates for students in need for more funding to college campuses from the state.

"We should be supporting our students as much as we support anybody else," Cowley said.

Strength in vulnerability

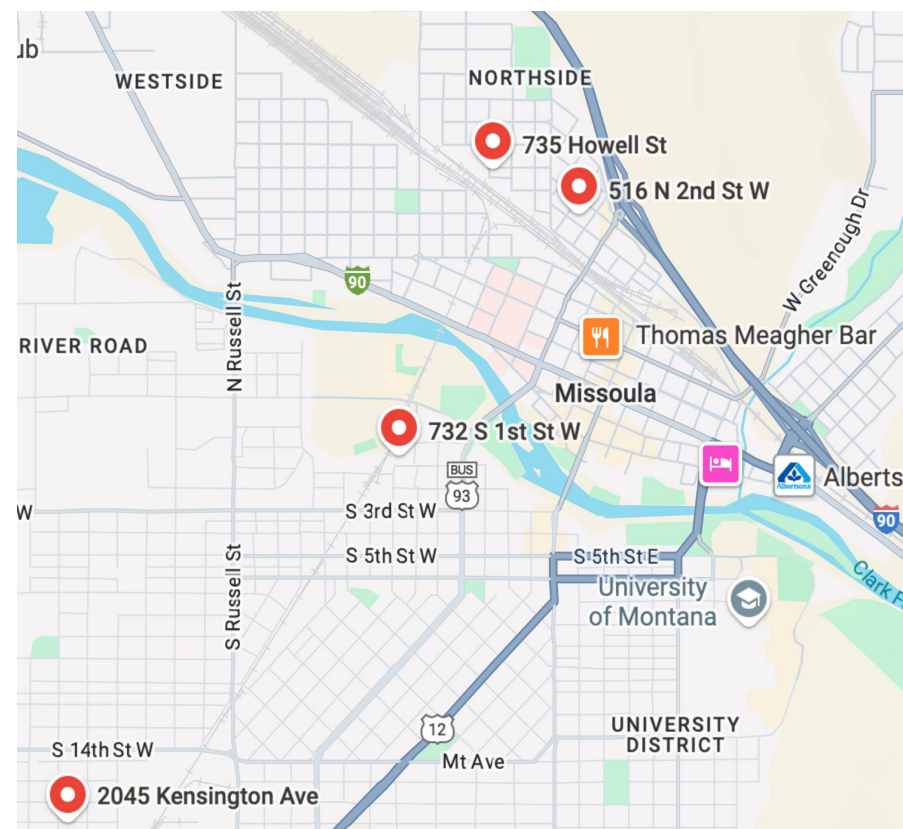
Foster said she often felt buried — buried by the stress of incoming rent payments she could barely afford to pay off, buried by trying to just keep her grades up in her last year of school.

For Foster, the only help seemed to be found in her community, vulnerability and her art. Foster studies media arts with a minor in entertainment management and hopes after graduating to continue her schooling and get a master's degree. Foster's apartment is full of paintings — a practice she uses as an escape, including one of two buffalo that sits in her living room.

When Foster found out there was a competition to paint the food pantries in Missoula last semester, she immediately jumped at the opportunity. She always hoped to be able to paint a public space in Missoula, she said, so people could see her art in the community. After applying, Foster won and was able to paint a mural on a food pantry on Howell Street.

Foster titled the painting "Mato Eats," and in a caption of a post she made on Instagram about the piece she said, "Mato is a bear that catches a fish, eats it, burps and goes to sleep, embodying that everyone deserves to eat a meal, have access to food and go to sleep with a full stomach." Foster herself has already slept through a couple of nights on an empty stomach this semester.

Eventually, the toll of food insecurity and stressors became too much for Foster and she needed help. She told her family, friends and even her college adviser about her struggles with food insecurity. Some of her friends who



Pictured are several food pantries across Missoula. The Kensington Avenue and Howell Street locations have fridges allowing for a larger selection of food. **MACKENNA GLEAVE | MONTANA KAIMIN**

worked at a food pantry gave Foster a large bag of brown rice and a bucket of oatmeal. Her college adviser gave her the \$75 gift card to Albertsons that allowed her to have a home-cooked meal.

After receiving the donations, Foster said she felt the power of community and giving back. When Foster visited the food pantry she painted for the first time after completing the project, she noticed how empty it was. She said as soon as she gets some money she's going to fill the pantry up with food.

"For a big part of my life, I've been all about caring about people, about others, activism, advocacy, all these freaking things," Foster said. "And what I want to do is, like, take all of these things and shove them into something that can birth a system that gives back."

Foster now works at the Branch Center as the student coordinator for DiverseU, an annual event that allows speakers to spread awareness and talk about different topics to promote diversity and civil discourse. Foster hopes to use the event to spark discussion and change in the University and Missoula.

"If we actually want foundational change, like we're all freaking preaching and wishing for, then this is something that you would do," Foster said. "This is an opportunity to strategize with community, walk through healthy disagreements and find similarities with one another."

On Saturday, Foster had a can of soup for one meal and then the turkey bowl she made

for dinner. The next day, Foster had some peaches for breakfast and leftovers from the previous night's dinner.

Despite a stress-ridden six weeks, Foster was grateful — grateful for her community, grateful for her friends from the food pantry who immediately worked together to help and grateful for her adviser who helped make her home-cooked meal possible. But none of it would have happened if she wasn't vulnerable, she said.

"Realizing living on my own is a tough journey itself, and that, I guess, in order to get what I need, I do need to ask, and I need to go out of my way to create avenues to get those resources," Foster said. "And, often, that comes with communication, and it comes with being vulnerable with those people that you know you can trust."

For other students struggling with the issue, Foster said you need to advocate for yourself even if you're scared that others may not listen.

"Make the University hear that we're struggling and how it can prevent food insecurity moving forward, or what it can do to help benefit our lives, because we're giving ourselves to this institution, mentally, physically and spiritually, way beyond that," Foster said. "Advocate for yourselves."

As of Tuesday, Oct. 1 O'Maste Win Foster has received her full financial aid reimbursement

UM professor builds bridges via books

KATE WIDMER

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Professor Quan Manh Ha has been teaching literature at the University of Montana since 2011, specializing in post-1900 American literature, multi-ethnic United States literature, Vietnam War literature, critical race theory and literary translation.

In a faculty that's predominantly white, he ends up teaching many different types of classes on literature, such as African-American literature or U.S. Writers of Color in addition to Asian-American literature and more general classes. However, his speciality is literature related to the Vietnam War.

Ha's upcoming anthology, "The Colors of April: Fiction on the Vietnam War's Legacy 50 Years Later," co-edited with UM alum and Ha's former student Cab Tran, is adding to the long list of books released since Vietnam and America achieved diplomacy. While a number of works about the Vietnam War have been published in the years since the fall of Saigon, a common problem with these works is that the writing available to Western audiences is much more focused on what Americans

experienced than what the Vietnamese experienced, Ha said.

Ha and Tran's intention with this anthology is to give perspective on what it was like to be Vietnamese during the war, and what it's like to have grown up in the fallout of the war from various standpoints.

"We don't see anything that put the communist perspective with the anti-communist refugee perspective together in one single book, and I feel like it's time for healing," Ha said. "It's time for reconciliation, and it's time for an American reader to see what the Vietnamese think about the war."

Ha has witnessed the divide in knowledge about the war firsthand. Born and raised in Vietnam, Ha obtained his English bachelor's degree from Da Lat University in 2000. A scholarship for his master's degree took him to Troy, Alabama, where he began studying the intersections of Vietnamese and Vietnamese-American literature. But, like many graduate students, he had no idea what to write his thesis on. So, he asked his director.

"[He] said, 'You're Vietnamese, don't write something about Mark Twain, Hemingway or Shakespeare, because there's no way you can

compete with all these Americans and British people out there who have a strong background in Western culture,'" Ha said. "Then he told me, 'Why don't you write something that most Americans cannot do?'" So, Ha began focusing his work on Vietnamese-American short stories, eventually choosing Vietnamese-American literature as the subject of his doctorate dissertation.

It'd be a misconception to assume editing an anthology is easier than writing something from scratch, though. Ha and Tran went through countless texts, with Ha pulling from Vietnamese works and Tran pulling from Vietnamese-American works. After the selections were made, Ha had to translate the works written in Vietnamese to English, an arduous process exacerbated by how completely different the languages are. For example, while English has first-person, limited, omniscient and various other kinds of points of view to write from, Vietnamese doesn't.

One of the biggest challenges Ha and Tran faced while translating was preserving the spirit and integrity of a piece, while still having it make sense in English, Ha said. Figuring out what needs to be kept, erased, added or mod-

ified was a process of negotiating. "It's all an art too, a lot of times you interpret the story as a translator," Ha said. "It may not be the same way the writer interprets the story, but that's okay, because we don't have to look at a story the same way the author did."

"The Colors of April," which will be released in March 2025, isn't the only landmark publication on Ha's resume. Ha recently translated Hường Thu Dương's "No Man River," a contemporary classic novel originally published in 2002 that details the lives of widows and children following the events of the Vietnam War. Ha's version will be the first translation made for the American audience, and is set to be released later in 2025 through Penguin, a leading global publisher. It'll be his second release for Penguin, the first being Tạ Duy Anh Ha's "The Termite Queen," which was released in 2023 and co-translated with Charles Waugh.

"It's kind of funny," Ha said, "because nowadays people said, 'with AI and Google translation, why do we need translators?' And I said, 'Well, maybe those two things are okay for non-literary text, but for literature, you need a human being to do it. It's not like a technical manual.'"

2022 'Speak No Evil' vs. 2024 'Speak No Evil'

KAIRI LISING

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2024 "Speak No Evil" just hit the silver screen, but little does the general public know, it is actually a remake of the 2022 version. Which is better? Who's speaking more evil? Who's speaking no evil? These are the important questions.

At initial viewing, the two films are nearly identical. If we started the same films at the same time, the frames would match up within the shots. Not necessarily a bad thing, but the 2024 version was definitely heavily inspired by the cinematography.

Both films also follow the same plot. A normal family meets a freaky family while on vacation followed by the family becoming friends with said freaky family, and then, naturally, the freaky family invites the normal family to their home in the country. Freaky family gets freaky. We've seen it before.

So what makes the films different? The pacing and ending. The 2024

version takes a more "second-hand embarrassment" path in its storytelling. There's one particular dinner scene that was excruciating to watch. I wanted to crawl out of my skin.

The 2022 version packed a different punch. It was easier to like the freaky family because their weirdness was more subtle. So subtle that when the film reaches its climax, we can understand how the normal family could've been groomed into believing the act.

The frustration from both movies naturally comes from this question: Why didn't the normal family just leave? There were so many signs that things were going wrong. That's the problem, though: they did. Halfway through both movies, the normal family is put off for the last time and leaves. This feels almost too easy. Credits should roll — they escaped! But as they zoom down the highway, the daughter starts freaking out. She lost her comfort item, a stuffed rabbit. The family begrudgingly turns around and gets sucked back into the freaky

family's web.

A lot of moviegoers disliked these two movies because of how unrealistic the character's actions are. To that I say, well yeah, obviously. It's a movie, not a documentary. We watch movies to experience different worlds and these two movies just so happen to depict a world where humans make stupid decisions, which isn't too far off from our own.

So which movie is better? Hard to say. Both were enjoyable to watch, and with each movie, you get a slightly different experience. I did end up liking the 2022 original a little more than the remake. I always recommend supporting smaller independent films anyway, so seeing the 2022 "Speak No Evil" over its remake is the better choice.

"Speak No Evil" 2022 - 7/10

"Speak No Evil" 2024 - 6/10



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TIM SHEEHY WANTS TO TRANSFER PUBLIC LANDS SO WEALTHY OUTSIDERS LIKE HIM CAN BUY UP EVEN MORE



"Local control has to be returned. Whether that means some of these public lands get turned over to state agencies, or even counties." ¹

— TIM SHEEHY

EXPERTS AGREE. If public lands are transferred to state and local governments, they inevitably get sold to the highest bidder as local jurisdictions can't afford to manage them.

When Tim Sheehy came to Montana, he bought 37,000 acres and prime elk habitat, sold access for \$12,500 a week to millionaires like him and denied access for Montanans.

Sheehy's proposal to transfer off public lands would let out-of-state millionaires like him buy even more of the best land Montana has to offer, and Montanans would lose access to the hunting land they have enjoyed for generations.

STOP TIM SHEEHY BEFORE OUR MONTANA PUBLIC LANDS ARE GONE FOREVER.

Tim Sheehy refused to provide access to Montanans to hunt on his "prime elk country," instead selling luxury hunting packages to rich tourists for \$12,500 a week.

NBC NEWS

MAY 6, 2024

HUFFPOST

Whoops: Montana GOP Senate Candidate Steps On Third Rail With Public Lands Position
...inevitably it leads to selling off and privatizing public lands...

OCTOBER 18, 2023

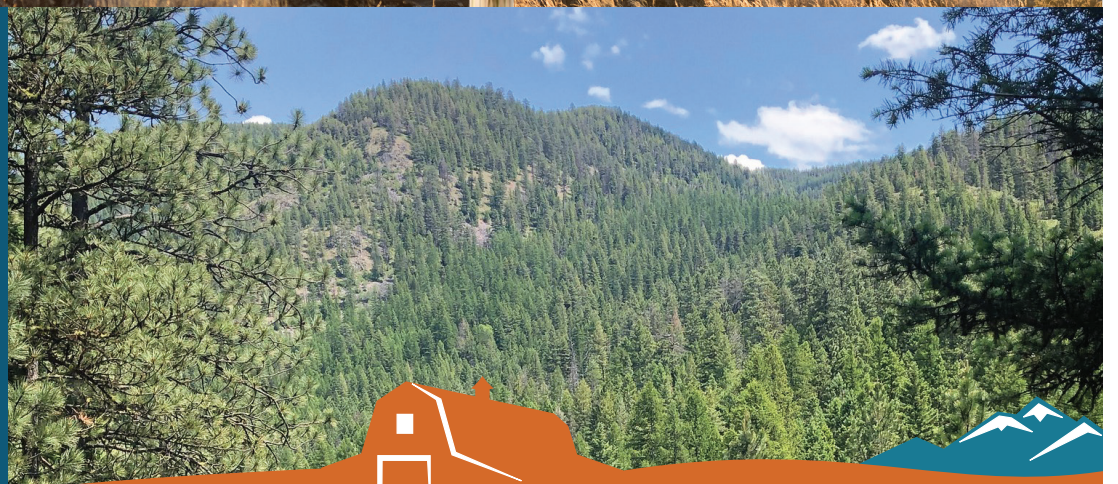
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JON TESTER

Is Montana's Champion For Public Lands And Will Always Protect Places Like Lolo National Forest



JON TESTER FOR U.S. SENATE

¹ Working Ranch Radio Show, October 7, 2023

PAID FOR BY MONTANANS FOR TESTER

Ski hills lack snowpack, hope for more powder

RILEY COMSTOCK
riley.comstock@umontana.edu

The college crowd has a lot of options for skiing around Missoula, but the winter of 2023-24 was marked by low snowpack, creating a distinct barrier to recreation for many in the snow sports community.

According to the National Geographic Society, snowpack is defined as snow that falls on the ground but doesn't melt because temperatures remain at or below freezing.

Many people attributed the low snowpack to the El Niño southern oscillation, a climate pattern marked by shifts in warming in the Pacific Ocean along the equator. This last winter was "one of the strongest El Niños on record," Kyle Bocinsky, the director of climate extension in the Montana Climate Office, said.

Bocinsky's job with the climate extension is to make climate data more available to citizens. A lot of his outreach goes to agriculture, but also to outdoor recreation. The climate office runs the Montana Mesonet, the largest weather station network in the state, and helps produce weekly reports on drought monitoring.

"When we think of El Niño and La Niña events in the Northern Rockies, El Niño events tend to be dryer and warmer than normal. La Niña events tend to be wetter and cooler," Bocinsky said. "We had the lowest snowpack on record for portions of the Flathead Basin and for the Clark Fork."

Director of marketing at Lookout Pass Mike Sawyer said three out of the four models they look at for forecasting are showing an increase in snow and a decrease in temperature, both positive signs for the ski mountain.

"We feel very optimistic," Sawyer said. "We are all excited and hope the winter comes through."

These winter data and forecasts coming from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Climate Prediction Center point to a weak La Niña pattern emerging from now till November, and potentially lasting until March. While the pattern might be weak, that doesn't necessarily mean a weak winter.

Bocinsky isn't just a climate modeler, though. He is a skier and father of two.

"That was sort of a lost winter for my kids who are learning how to ski," Bocinsky said. This last winter was hard because much of the front country terrain, where he would teach his kids to ski, was inconsistent or not ideal.

The poor snowpack didn't just affect new skiers. College students wanting to pick up or progress in telemark skiing were also at a disadvantage.

The University of Montana's telemark

skiing club felt the effects of the weak winter throughout its competition season. The telemark club loans out telemark skis, hosts lessons and participates in the Missoula Telemark Skiing Challenge at Snowbowl, a local ski hill about 30 minutes outside of Missoula.

The challenge, which has been running for over 40 years, is a seven week long dual slalom race in the spring that anyone can participate in. Last spring, the races were sometimes postponed because of unideal conditions.

"It was just ice, so they were fast races, and there were some big falls," Lucy Decker, a 21-year-old senior from Petaluma, California, and the president of the telemark club, said.

This created problems for the team and the event because the final races were delayed, which prevented some sponsors from attending, Decker said. This is affected team spirit.

"Morale was low on some of the race days," Decker said. "We didn't get that great of attendance during some of the really windy, icy days."

Decker said in general, morale for all snow sports was low. People weren't excited to travel or go on group trips for bad snow.

Despite last year's struggles, Decker has big hopes for this year. She plans to organize a trip to rent out Teton Pass, a small resort near Choteau, Montana, for the team.

"I think trips are what bring people closer together, so that's gonna be a game changer for sure," Decker said.

Low morale was felt throughout the snow sports community, and hit some local hills with a rough start.

"We got some snow, but a lot of people had already lost their interest in skiing because they hadn't skied over Christmas," Sawyer said.

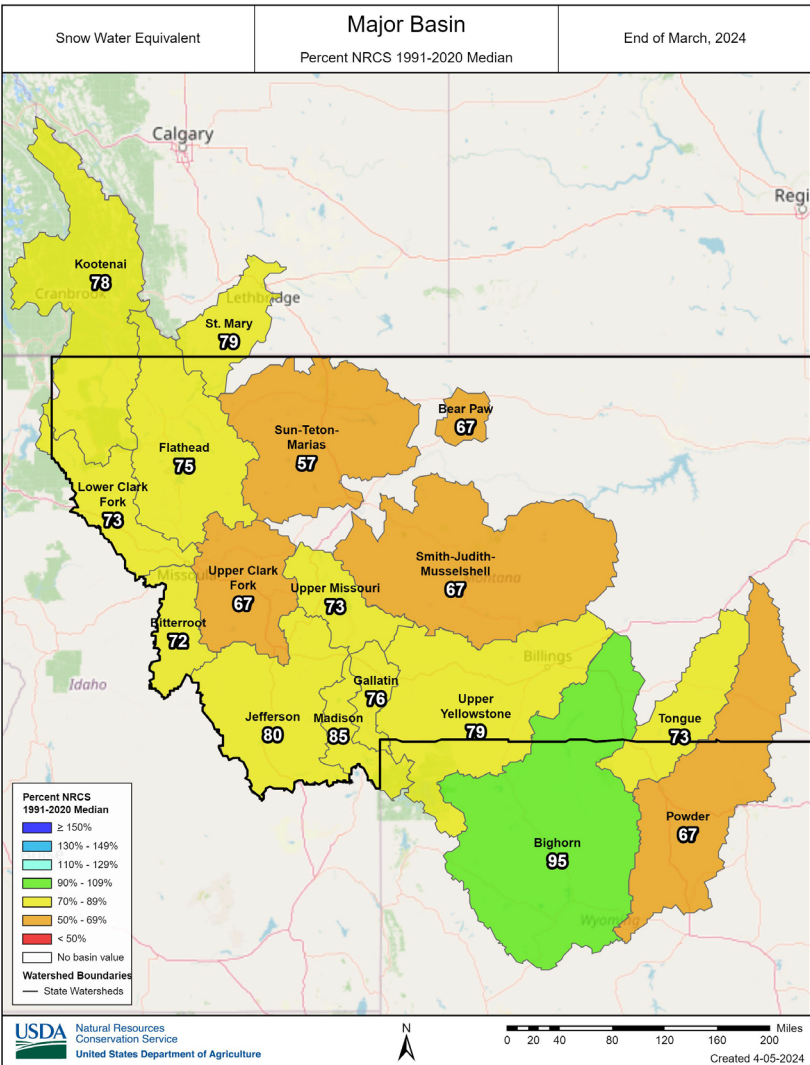
Lookout Pass, one of the most popular mountains for UM students because of its cheap season pass, lucked out in terms of snowfall, but still felt the effects of the dry winter.

A season pass at Lookout costs \$159 for college students and \$61 for a full day on the weekend. Snowbowl's student season pass cost \$706 if bought before Nov. 10 and \$781 after.

Lookout saw 363 inches of snow at the end of the season, lower than its average of 450 inches, but better than other mountains across the state, Sawyer said.

"We didn't get it in abundance early, so getting the mountain open was a challenge," Sawyer said.

The challenge wasn't just the lack of snow, but how it impacted certain days where high attendance is expected. Martin Luther King Jr. Day, Presidents Day and Christmas are some of the biggest revenue drivers for ski resorts.



The map shows the snowpack for Western Montana and Wyoming as of March 2024. The highest snowpack was in Bighorn with 95% of the median snowpack from 1991-2020. CONTRIBUTED | THE NATIONAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE

"Typically about 40% or more of the season's business is done over those dates," Sawyer said. But between low snowpack and a bitter cold spell over Martin Luther King Jr. Day weekend, people weren't as interested later in the season.

The mid-January cold front brought negative temperatures to Missoula and even more extreme lows to the mountain. Sawyer said the ski area had to close the Eagle Peak chairlift and area at times because it took too long for people to get there and back to the lodge, risking excessive exposure to cold.

Despite early season challenges, the mountain saw success into the late season, closing down April 20.

While people were not as excited for the season, Sawyer said the mountain was not overly financially impacted by the lackluster snow. Over the summer, it cut bushes and shrubs in the frontside glades so in the event of another low snowpack season, people aren't hitting vegetation.

"La Niña tends to be a stronger signal," Bocinsky said.

Bocinsky is anticipating a more positive snowpack this winter. He is hopeful this season will bring better conditions and more opportunities for sharing the sport he loves with his kids.

"We are really looking forward to this coming winter because the forecast looks a lot better," Bocinsky said.

Lost Horse Bouldering Fest

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Climbers across Western Montana were called to the wild last weekend in anticipation for the Lost Horse Bouldering Fest. The guttural grunts of rock climbers reaching for their next hold echoed on a sunny Saturday afternoon.

The first bouldering competition took place on July 30, 1994 when Eric Chesebro, Jim Striebel and other local climbers created a guide with difficulty ratings for each of the boulder routes in the Lost Horse area. Seven of the boulders were named and agreed to be included in the competition. In the first years of the competition, running and biking races were also included, which have since been phased out.

The 30th anniversary event was hosted by the Western Montana Climbers Coalition and featured climbing, live music, yoga, raffle tickets and free beer.

Harrison Polly, a University of Montana climber, came to the event after seeing a poster on campus. “I met a lot of new people who love climbing just like me and made a lot of new friends,” Polly said. “It was also cool seeing all the young kids climbing and getting outside. It shows the climbing community is growing.”

So what is this granola gathering of climbers crawling over large rocks like animals? Bouldering is a style of climbing that consists of short ascents with hard moves just high enough that a climber could come crashing down onto pads placed below them with relatively no injury.

Lost Horse is near Hamilton with tons of free camping and plenty of National Forest land for all to enjoy. Hosted every year in September, the Lost Horse Bouldering Fest is a spot for all skill levels to test their strength and meet people with common interests. When asked if he had been to the climbing competition before, Polly said, “Nah, that was my first time at the Lost Horse comp, but I’ll definitely be back next year.”



TOP RIGHT: Polly uses athletic tape to protect his fingertips from the sharp rock.

BOTTOM RIGHT: Climbers flock to the boulders in Lost Horse Canyon, bringing all the necessary items for a full day of climbing and music.

Harrison Polly, a sophomore studying forestry at the University, reaches for the last hand hold to complete a route in the Lost Horse Boulder Fest hosted by Western Montana Climbers Coalition.



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